

EUPHEMISMS

1. Uwagi ogólne

Tekst *Euphemisms* jest adresowany do osób zainteresowanych tematyką uniwersalnych zjawisk i zmian zachodzących w języku w zakresie semantyki i użycia konkretnych pojęć w języku. Przykłady zaczerpnięte zostały z języka angielskiego.

2. Poziom zaawansowania: B2+/C1

3. Czas trwania opisanych ćwiczeń: 25 minut (ćwiczenia), około 45 minut z dyskusją

4. Cele dydaktyczne

Celem ćwiczeń jest przybliżenie studentom znaczenia niektórych powszechnie spotykanych eufemizmów w języku angielskim, rozwinięcie tematu zmian zachodzących we współczesnym języku mediów, polityki i zjawisk społecznych lub też uzupełnienie innej lekcji o pokrewnej tematyce.

5. Uwagi i sugestie

Eufemizmy stosowane we współczesnym języku budzą zainteresowanie studentów, których na ogół tematyka ta bawi.

Tekst autorstwa Roba Kyffa przytacza przykłady eufemizmów wraz z ich znaczeniem. Quiz na dopasowywanie eufemizmów do ich znaczeń (ćwiczenie 4), przeprowadzany w parach lub grupach trzyosobowych, dostarczy znakomitej zabawy z uwagi na często nieoczywiste znaczenia niektórych eufemizmów.

Ćwiczenia 5, 6 i 7 ze względów organizacyjnych najlepiej jest przeprowadzać w parach (użycie słowników).

Ćwiczenia 1, 2, 3, 8 oraz 9 najlepiej jest przeprowadzać, dając studentom czas na przedyskutowanie w parach możliwych odpowiedzi, a następnie porównanie ich na forum grupy. Przy współpracy aktywnych studentów ćwiczenia 8 oraz 9 mogą się przekształcić w interesującą dyskusję na temat zmian zachodzących w znaczeniu pojęć oraz tego, jak język mediów, polityki i zjawisk społecznych komentuje współczesną rzeczywistość.

EUPHEMISMS

1. In pairs, try to answer the following questions:

1. What are euphemisms?
2. For what reasons are euphemisms used?

2. Look at the definition of 'euphemism'. Can you give any examples of euphemisms taken from everyday language?

euphemism, noun – /'ju:.fə.mi.zəm/ [C or U]

Definition: a word or phrase used to avoid saying an unpleasant or offensive word.

Source: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/euphemism>, access: 7 March, 2016.

3. In pairs, discuss the answers to the following questions:

1. For what reasons might people avoid using certain unpleasant or offensive words?
2. Why are euphemisms sometimes found for certain neutral concepts, e.g. 'tax increase'?

4. Read about euphemisms in modern language. Are any of your ideas reflected in the text below? After reading the text, do the quiz – match euphemisms to their meanings.

Deceivers 'Euph'anize the Language

By Rob Kyff

Euphemisms are linguistic brooms that try to sweep everything — from taxes to sex to baldness — under the rug (in the case of baldness, literally under the rug). Death insurance becomes "life insurance," indecent exposure becomes a "wardrobe malfunction" and an "invasion" becomes an "incursion."

Discount stores, for instance, now call customers "guests" and employees "associates," while businesses refer to salespeople as "marketing representatives."

The airline industry, given its association with danger, discomfort and delays, is rife with sugar-coated words: life preservers are "flotation devices," first-class seating is now "business class," and the table where you place your coats, gloves and hats for security screening is called a "divestment table," as if you were shedding some low-performing stocks.

Even "euphemism" has been used euphemistically. When the character Honey in Edward Albee's play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, says she'd like to "powder her nose," George asks his wife to "show her where we keep the euphemism."

Let's put the "you" in euphemisms. See whether you can match each euphemism with its meaning.

Euphemisms:

1. slumber box
2. industrial action
3. rightsizing
4. impaired
5. revenue enhancement
6. armed reconnaissance
7. birthday suit
8. negative contribution
9. handyman's special
10. lower ground floor
11. correction
12. leverage
13. holiday ownership
14. correctional facility
15. self-deliverance
16. entourage
17. negative patient care outcome
18. public assistance
19. interfere with
20. hang paper
21. police action
22. motion discomfort
23. cash flow problem

Meanings:

- a. sycophants
- b. tax increase
- c. suicide
- d. coffin
- e. death
- f. dilapidated house
- g. welfare
- h. laying off workers
- i. borrow
- j. nakedness
- k. drop in stock prices
- l. prison
- m. financial loss
- n. assault sexually
- o. war
- p. be broke
- q. labor strike
- r. drunk
- s. bombing
- t. pass bad checks
- u. time share
- v. car, sea or air sickness
- w. cellar

Source: <http://www.briscar.com/featurepages/wordguy.htm>, access: 7 March, 2016.

5. Look at some more examples of euphemisms. Which expressions seem "nicer"?

1. tax relief / lowering of tax
2. global warming / climate change
3. regime change / military overthrow
4. prisoners of war / enemy combatants
5. torture / abuse
6. fundamentalist / extremist
7. ethnic cleansing / genocide
8. globalization / free trade / free market economy
9. you're fired / you're not being hired or promoted / we've decided to give your career a different direction
10. someone made a poor decision / someone is guilty of some misdeed

6. Identify what areas of life the expressions above come from. Who might be interested in using the euphemistic forms?

7. What are the differences in meaning between the expressions in exercise 5 above? Consult a dictionary if the meaning and connotations of the given concepts are not clear enough.

8. In pairs, discuss the following questions:

1. Do you think that using euphemisms is:
 - a. always a bad thing
 - b. generally bad, but sometimes justified
 - c. always a good thing?
2. If we decided to stop using euphemisms, our language would become:
 - a. better
 - b. worse?

9. Look at the quiz (exercise 4) again and find examples of:

1. 'Good' (justified) euphemisms
2. 'Bad' euphemisms (distorting the truth)

Sources: *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus*, Cambridge University Press; <http://www.creators.com/lifestylefeatures/words-and-trivia/rob-kyff-word-guy/deceivers-euph-anize-the-language.html>, access: 11 February, 2013; <http://www.translatorscafe.com/cafe/MegaBBS/thread-view.asp?threadid=5615&messageid=215774>, access: 7 March, 2016; <http://www.creators.com/lifestylefeatures/words-and-trivia/rob-kyff-word-guy/only-things-certain-are-death-and-syntaxes.html>, access: 11 February, 2013.

KEY

1. SS' own answers.
2. SS' own answers.
3. Possible answers:
 - 1 – to avoid hurting someone's feelings, to avoid being too abrupt or too direct, for political correctness, because it looks better in the media, etc.
 - 2 – to make certain phenomena look nicer than they really are, to obscure the true nature of something, because some neutral terms have lost their appeal, etc.
4. Answers to quiz: 1d, 2q, 3h, 4r, 5b, 6s, 7j, 8m, 9f, 10w, 11k, 12i, 13u, 14l, 15c, 16a, 17e, 18g, 19n, 20t, 21o, 22v, 23p
5. Euphemistic expressions: 1 – tax relief, 2 – climate change, 3 – regime change, 4 – enemy combatants, 5 – abuse, 6 – fundamentalist (because it implies some kind of legitimate foundation), 7 – ethnic cleansing, 8 – free trade / free market economy, 9 – we've decided to give your career a different direction, 10 – someone made a poor decision
6. 1, 8 – political or economic language, 2 – politics, media, science, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 – politics, media, 9 – corporate/employment policy, 10 – media
Politicians – to conceal or justify some unpopular actions or phenomena or make other phenomena seem more attractive.
Media – to present a more (or less) favourable picture of something, to justify some actions.
Corporate officials – to prevent an abrupt reaction from a person who is being fired.
7. Possible answers: Some phrases clearly have positive connotations, while others quite negative ones, e.g. Students may also, with the use of a dictionary, look at the meaning of particular expressions at the word level.
8. Discussion, SS' providing their own answers, which may vary, but have to be justified.
9. SS' own answers, which may vary, but have to be justified.